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Research Article

**EMPOWERMENT, EROTIC PASSION,
AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN
IBSEN'S *ROSMERSHOLM*****Literature****Keywords:** Empowerment, Erotic Passion and Love, Henrik Ibsen, Louka, Rebecca West, and Sexual Harassment.**Mohammad Amir Hossain****M. Phil in English JU & PhD (Research Fellow) in English, JU, Bangladesh.****Abstract**

This article would like to present a critical analysis on Ibsen's play *Rosmersholm* and its female protagonist, Rebecca West. For this purpose, the whole article aims to look at empowerment, modern woman, erotic passion and love, sexual harassment through which female character has been investigated. It aims to analyze Ibsen's treatment of women during 19th-century Norway. It would like to make also a comparative study between Rebecca West and Louka with a view to fostering Ibsen's and Shaw's attitudes towards women of their contemporary age. In this way the aim of the researcher is to highlight the mystery of lower class women of a helpless society where they have no right, freedom and say.

Introduction

Henrik Ibsen presents 19th-century Norwegian middle class women status and social reality in the play *Rosmersholm*. The playwright would like to place a vivid picture of radicalization of the Norwegian society to make the case of its protagonist's apostasy appear to be faithful. Through the art of characterization, he would like to present the political system of 19th- century conservatives and liberals in Norway. Ibsen wants to highlight the charismatic power through the social pressure which is governed by social system. In terms of his feminist creation, Rebecca is a glaring example of a charismatic power. Ibsen wants to expose this type of charismatic power as well as hypnotizing power through creating a woman character. Ibsen, through the characters of Rebecca, Rosmer, Mortensgaard and Kroll, wants to focus on the differences between the radical and the conservative outlooks of a 19th-century Norway.

This article would like to examine erotic passion and love of Rebecca, being reflected in *Rosmersholm* with a view to fostering the issues of power and sexuality. Ibsen's aim is to show the sexual violence of his contemporary women through the character-portrayal. Moreover, in this study, the researcher would like to highlight a comparative study between Rebecca and Louka with a view to exposing power, freedom, and self-existence.

In the play-text, Ibsen with his ideology and psychology would like to familiarize his contemporary Norwegian social stigma and dogmatic concepts of so-called communities in front of readers and audience with a view to making the future generation conscious of obsolete facts and psychological trauma of female community of his age. How a group of mighty people rule a group of weaker community is his aim to make the younger generation alert and conspicuous of the world views.

Empowerment of Rebecca West

In the play, *Rosmersholm* (1886), Henrik Ibsen presents 19th-century Scandinavian middle class female positions and social reality, and the political conflicts, and dilemma of the liberals, and the conservatives in Norway. This study wants to focus on the love between Rosmer and Rebecca West. Through this play, Ibsen wants to show that love makes no difference between the high and the low. He also presents how a man can fall into love for a young lady through breaking his long familial tradition. The play-text also indicates as to follow the dictum of a man's love how a woman can establish herself as a powerful person in her master's house. In this way, a woman enables herself to fulfill her long-cherished dream-cum-power by removing his wife, Beata forever. There Rebecca is able to obtain dominancy, power and hypnotizing influence over the husband and the wife. She, with her ready wit, prudence, and intellectual capability, is able to spread dominance, power, and ruling passion in a rich man's house where she works as a maid-servant. By discussing all these issues, this study intends to investigate Rebecca's power in the light of the critical comments made by critics and scholars, including- Fredrik Engelstad, Beret Wicklund, and Trond Woxen.

In "The Centrality of Power in Henrik Ibsen's Drama", Engelstad (2001) points out about power and psychological trait in Ibsen's play *Rosmersholm*. The critic says that the silence of power in Ibsen's worldview, and his self-searching attitude converges in a wonderful way. Ibsen elaborates his plot-construction through the character-study. The central questions in such plot-construction are dominant, dependent position by driving the shifting alliances. Driving forces in the plot are the shifting constellation of power. Engelstad indicates how a female power is intrinsic as a category of power structure in Ibsen's plays. For instance, Ibsen shows an awareness of a category of power-structure in the play, *Rosmersholm*. Engelstad deems Ibsen's category of power as a charismatic power through the personal gift for fascination. From Ibsen's psychology behind the charismatic power-structure, this category of power-structure does not function well in the modern age. His interest is based on the Norwegian middle-class family life-style. Ibsen wants to highlight the charismatic power through the social pressure which is governed by familial system. In terms of his feminist creation, Rebecca is a glaring example of charismatic power. Engelstad wants to connect this pressure of social power with the traditional authority, order, and system. It is the concept of power of social pressure which Ibsen broadens through his philosophical mind by focusing on some powerful female persons, including Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*, Hedda Gabler in *Hedda Gabler*, and Rebecca in *Rosmersholm*. Charismatic power is an area of psychology more than spirituality. Fredrik Engelstad thinks that Rebecca West, while living in the patriarchal power, is not considered to be powerless. In the play, *Rosmersholm*, Ibsen sheds a new light on such a woman who wants to influence her hypnotizing power over husband and wife in the name of friendship. (Bandhopadhyay, 2006, p. 94)

Beret Wicklund (2001) in an essay, "Ibsen's Demons: *Rosmersholm* as Gothic Drama," remarks how the play deals with the political conflict between the liberals and the conservatives in Norway. His idea about power structure signifies that Ibsen combines psychology and politics

together. If we explain Trond Woxen's comments on Rosmer's change over to become apostasy and Rebecca's identity of a powerful woman, we will realize that a kind, gentle, and righteous John Rosmer loses his faith in Christianity due to Rebecca's hypnotizing power and her radical ideas and thoughts. He also loses his wife Beata, who commits suicide by throwing herself from the nearby hanging bridge into a deep chasm of the Mill falls. She had been depressed about not being able to bear any children for the continuation of the famous Rosmer pedigree. In order to take care of Beata, Rebecca enters the household. She persuades Beata to meet her fatal doom by committing suicide. After her death, Rebecca stays on, and influences Rosmer to follow her radical ideas. And, she tries to make him change his religious path. Both the arch-conservative Doctor Kroll and the liberal Mortensgaard engage in the battle to expose Rosmer's mystery. During this battle, many unpleasant truths come out. Meanwhile, the house-keeper, Madam Helseth, warns about the white horse that she perceives.

Before Rosmer's act of giving up the faith, the arch-conservative of the town, Kroll, talks with Rebecca about his own family. After a pause, Kroll says to her that dissension and rebellion have made their way into his own household. They have destroyed the quiet nature of his family life. He says to her about his children that Laurits is the ringleader in the conspiracy at school. Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep *The Lighthouse* in. About the regional or national situation, and his joining of active politics, Kroll also tells Rosmer that it is not possible for Kroll to stand beside Rosmer anymore. Kroll is a Headmaster who makes his way into his own school through the spirit of revolt. It comes to his realization that boys in the senior class have had a secret society that is continuing for more than 6-months and has been taking in Mortensgaard's paper. Kroll also equates religion with the state and radical ideas with threat for the state. At any cost, he would defend the state as a citizen should. Thus, *Rosmersholm* places a vivid picture of radicalization of the Norwegian society to make the case of its protagonist's apostasy appear to be faithful. This following conversation includes a quarrel between Rosmer and Kroll over the apostasy:

Rosmer: A new summer has bloomed in my heart—my eyes have regained the clearness of youth. And, accordingly, I am standing where —

Kroll: Where, where are you standing?

Rosmer: Where your children are standing.

Kroll: You? You! It's impossible. What do you say, you are standing?

Rosmer: On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

Kroll (letting his head drop): An Apostate, John Rosme an apostate.

(*Rosmersholm*, Act I, 20)

To show an importance of apostasy in the plot of the play, we realize that the final tragedy of two more suicides takes place under social pressure and stigma upon Beata, Rosmer, and Rebecca. Rosmer is thrown into a consciousness of his guilt or liabilities for suicide of Beata, and Rebecca into the memories of her sexual repression at the hands of her foster father, Doctor West. Whatever truth may be there in the charge brought against these two persons; this particular

motivation of Kroll and other conservatives is crucial. Kroll does not suffer from any scruple in the matter of his tough line of action against Rosmer and Rebecca. He rejects Rosmer's offer for using weapons of gentlemen. Kroll makes a complaint that he no longer knows him in the vital issues of life whom he owes no consideration. Rosmer cannot prove any fortitude from his mission of ennobling people, and building up radical ideas, and democratic outlook in the country. Rebecca fails also to maintain Rosmer's morale by an extreme sense of power in her own way. Her sense is frustrated when Rosmer does not make use of a foot-bridge where Beata commits suicide. Thus, Rosmer proves his pertaining sense of guilt and loss at her suicide. (Bandhopadhyay, 2006, pp. 95-98)

While Kroll and his group leave no stone unturned to keep back Rosmer within the confinement of Christianity, Mortensgaard and his people insist on his joining their liberal party. It is interesting to note here how apostasy is found to be harmful by the liberal politicians. The following conversation between Rosmer and Mortensgaard focuses on the complexity of an apostasy:

Mortensgaard: Yes, a little (smiles slightly.) I hear that there has been a change of views in certain respects at Rosmersholm.

Rosmer: My views have changed to be a very considerable extent; I might almost say entirely.

Mortensgaard: That is what Miss West said. And, that was why she thought, I ought to come up and have a chat with you about this.

Rosmer: About what, Mr. Mortensgaard?

Mortensgaard: May I have your permission to announce in the "Searchlight" that you have altered your opinions, and are going to devote to the cause of free thought and progress?

Rosmer: By all means, I will go so far as to ask you to make the announcement.

Mortensgaard: Then, it shall appear tomorrow. It will be a great and weighty piece of news that the Reverend Mr. Rosmer of Rosmersholm has made up mind to join the force of light in that direction too.

Rosmer: I do not understand you.

Mortensgaard: What I mean is that it implies the gain of strong moral support for our party every time we win over an earnest, Christian minded adherent.

Rosmer: (With some astonishment) then, you don't know--? Did Miss West not tell you that as well?

Mortensgaard: What, Mr. Rosmer? Miss West was in a considerable

hurry. She told me to come up, and that I would hear the rest of it from yourself. (*Rosmersholm*, Act II, 33-34)

From this conversation, it is understood that a bitter quarrel is going to take place between Rosmer and Mortensgaard regarding the radical ideas for which Rosmer has become an apostate. Mortensgaard also realizes of Rebecca's influence upon Rosmer's mind. Their conversation gives us an idea of the insight about the state of Christianity over the psyche of the masses and also about the absence of a square readiness among the liberal politicians. Through the art of characterization, Ibsen would like to present the political system of 19th- century conservatives and liberals in Norway. Through the character of Kroll, the playwright wants to highlight how religion is considered to be valuable by the conservatives and how unscrupulous they are in the question of religious views. But, like a true radical, he wants to offer the compromising and opportunistic attitudes towards the liberal and the progressive forces. He wants to present radical attitudes by creating the character portrayal of Rebecca and Rosmer. Thus, the dramatist wants to unveil the political conflicts and crises between the radicals and the conservatives of a 19th-century Norway.

Now, let us look at the question of Power, which occurs in the play, *Rosmersholm*, while Kroll, bitterly, speaks of power, control, and domination about Rebecca. At one point, a crucial situation is found between Kroll and Rebecca regarding the suicide of Beata, Rosmer's apostasy, and cohabitation between Rosmer and Rebecca. Before committing suicide, Beata writes a letter on the sly with a view to divulging a secret and unwanted incident so that Kroll can understand that Rebecca is the main culprit behind all the tragic incidents at Rosmersholm. Moreover, we can get a vivid image of the mystery from the following conversation:

Rebecca: (looking at him) I have a notion that there was a time when you had an exceedingly strong confidence in me , dear Mr. Kroll—I might almost say, a warm belief.

Kroll (in a subdued voice): I believe, you could bewitch any one – if you set yourself to do it.

Rebecca: And, you say I set myself to do it!

Kroll: Yes, you did. I am no longer such a simpleton as to suppose that sentiment entered into your little game at all. You simply wanted to secure yourself admission to Rosmersholm – to establish yourself here. That was what I was to help you to. I see it now.

Rebecca: Then, you have completely forgotten that it was Beata that begged and entered me to come and live here.

Kroll: Yes, because you had bewitched her too. Are you going to pretend that friendship is the name for what she came to feel towards you? It was idolatry – adoration. It degenerated into – what I shall call it? – a sort of desperate passion. Yes, that is just the word for it.

Rebecca: Have the goodness to remember the condition your sister was in.

As far as I am concerned, I do not think, I can be said to be particularly emotional in any way.

Kroll: No that you certainly are not. But, that makes you all the more dangerous to the people; you wish to get into your power. It comes easy to you to act with deliberation and careful calculation, just because you have a cold heart.

Rebecca: Cold? Are you so sure of that?

Kroll: I am quite sure of it now. Otherwise, you could not have pursued your object here so unswervingly, year after year, yes, yes—you have gained what you wanted. You have got him and everything else here into your power. But, to carry out your schemes, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

Rebecca: It is not true. It is not I. It is you yourself who have made him Unhappy. (*Rosmersholm*, Act II, 50-51)

From Kroll's allegations and charges against Rebecca, we can realize the fact that she is able to spread her power and evil plan in Rosmer's house. She bewitches Beata. He also makes an objection that she is merely responsible for an unhappy state of Rosmer's mind. And, only for her, he alienates himself from Christianity, and her evil design is to occupy herself in Rosmersholm. According to Kroll, she is responsible for all unpleasant occurrences in Rosmersholm, especially for Rosmer's apostasy, premature death of Beata, and her physical relation with Rosmer. He condemns that the downfall of Rosmer brings about due to her evil design and conspiracy. Her power develops through hypnotizing influence upon husband and wife. But, Rebecca is found to be rejecting Kroll's accusation of hypnotizing power. She is able to capture and dominate man and woman in Rosmer's house. The following dialogue also gives us an idea about her motif:

Rebecca: (moving a little nearer to him): My dear Doctor Kroll, you say that so kindly and sincerely that I feel sure; you really bear me no ill-will.

Kroll: Ill-will? What do you mean?

Rebecca: Well, it would not be so very surprising, if it were rather painful for you to see me, a stranger, and doing just as I like here at Rosmersholm. (*Rosmersholm*, Act I, 8)

Rebecca claims herself to be a powerful woman. She confesses to Rosmer about her own powerful and unscrupulous plans. It is quite true that she plays her cards to win an entry to Rosmersholm. She knows that she should succeed in making her way by hook or by crook. She does not recognize any claim. Before her confession, Rosmer tells her that words are more categorical about his sense of her power, domination, and control. She believes that they will win together in the end. She captures his mind by her hypnotizing policy. Consequently, he appears as

a glove in her hand. He completely understands her tricks and policy. But, there is nothing to do. He accepts the challenge. Finally, he falls into victim of her hypnotic power.

Self-centered person manifests in Rebecca by accepting the challenge of self-destruction through suicide. She cannot accept how Beata quits her life by committing suicide, and creates an inextinguishable grief of a sense of guilt over Rosmer. Rosmer is the contending egotist with an obsessive sense of self-perfection. And, he throws a challenge of competition in love for him between Rebecca and Beata. A big sense of self is seen to actualize itself in power-structure that is both creative and destructive. It does not care for or wait for as to whether a person is a male or a female. (Bandhopadhyay, 2006, p.102)

In the play, *Rosmersholm*, apostasy and charismatic power also play a dominant role through which the inner significance of the play is unveiled apparently to the postmodern readers and audience. Ibsen, through the characters of Rebecca, Rosmer, Mortensgaards, and Kroll, wants to focus on the differences between the radical and the conservative outlooks of a 19th-century Norway.

Rebecca as a Modern Woman

In the 21st-century age, women are entering in the field of employment, including military, math and science, although still in minority number. They have equal opportunity to rise and become self-sufficient, to purchase real estate, have babies and fulfill their goal without men. Fifty years ago, women had to behave nicely to men in order to be selected by men and supported by them as the patriarchal society legally prohibited women from self-sufficiency. During that time, women had a choice between complying with the male-standard of beauty, behavior and submissiveness for marriage, remaining in her father's care, or suffer in poverty, prostitution, or mental asylum. But, in our age, women are not dependent on men for survival. They have equal opportunity to become self-sufficient, especially in the developed countries of the globe.

Women usually revel in an ambiguity which lies in between the postmodern 100% free financial ride- yet stay at home, and do what I'm told role, and the liberated woman of the future who has individual capability under the government. And, the government helps women aspire to their individual goal more than men ever had. A modern woman knows exactly what she wants. But, she is very discreet in her ways of getting them. She has a strong sense of family devotion, but stands firm in her role as a daughter, child, or wife. She is independent; and so, she enjoys herself; she is less self-sacrificing than a woman of yesterday. She speaks of her mind; she is willing to get physical pleasure when she needs anything. Because of her keen perception and sharp foresight, the modern woman is worth having and keeping in any field of the present age. (<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid.>)

However, according to Astride Saether (1997), a modern woman is free and financially independent with her own life-structure as is found in Rebecca's character; she is one of the new

types of women in Ibsen's gallery.¹ The theme in the play, *Rosmersholm*, is a paradigm of the age. The time is Ibsen's own. She is a daughter of a midwife, is born and grows up in the northern Norway. Her mother dies early. Then, she is adopted by Doctor West, an acquaintance of her mother. She is named and is brought up by him. She gets certain ideas of independence, radical world-view, and a sense of values that are in contrast with the contemporary thoughts and moral standard. From the west, she inherits a chest full of books, which is critical of social institution, church, state, and marriage. She turns out to be a young woman who has had her education in such a way that affords her a marginal place in the contemporary society. She becomes Rosmer's confident, his partner in intellectual discussion, and an erotic temptress. However, Rosmer does not come over to the side of free thinking and progress. Both Rosmer and Rebecca live together at Rosmersholm, and make new plans for their lives. Their ambition is that he "would go as a guest and emancipator from one home to another," and "create noble people everywhere in wider and wider circles of noble people." Their concept of 'noble' constitutes of an 'independent mind.' (Saether, 1997, p. 34)

Rebecca encourages Rosmer to complete of an idealistic social project. She inspires his radical ideas and his commitment to society and culture. She does not want a typical woman's life with a protective husband and her children. She stands forth as a new breed of woman who acquires a sense of independence. She sublimates her ambition to those of a man like Rosmer. In fact, she speaks with Rosmer, who is the representative of religious morality and public order. He wants them to drown all memories in freedom, joy and passion. But, both of them suffer from feelings of guilt by following the death of his wife, Beata. His proposal of marriage is a turning point in the play. She says that an erotic union between them is impossible. She gives no rational ground for her refusal to the proposal. She becomes upset by his proposal and threatens to follow Beate's footsteps if he posits in questioning her. There we stop and, like Rosmer, must ask "What is this?" A variety of different explanations has been ventured for Rebecca's sudden refusal. Why is Rebecca's attempt for an emancipation not successful? Why does she lose her courage and ambition? It is because of her experiences she has got from her adopted father, Doctor West, just after her mother's death. She knows Rosmer might give her marriage proposal any time. From her ready wit and knowledge, we understand that Rebecca is like a modern woman. She is a very self-conscious woman. She is fearless and courageous in nature. She has got no intention to abide by the rules and regulations of traditional authority. She rather wants to follow her ways of doing things. Like a true modern woman, she wants to fulfill her target, breaking the traditional norm and order of the age.

From feminist point of view, Rebecca is highly akin to a modern woman. She is independent, and is not bound by traditional ideas of her female role in a male-dominated society. She has got an aim in life that is not connected to that of a typical wife or mother. She appears to

¹ Astrid Saether's *The Female Guilt Complex in Contemporary Approaches*, pp.39-45.

be one of the most emancipated women of Ibsen's women characters. But, she does not succeed in her plan. Finally, she changes her course and ends her life in a mill race. The suicides of Rebecca and Rosmer may be deemed as a negation of a radical mindset. Rosmer loses out to his brother-in-law's reactionary way of ideas. She is outlived by a traditional and subjugated woman. (Saether, 1997, p. 35) Ibsen's women never hesitate to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of freedom and power. She sacrifices herself for the sake of her power, control, and domination at Rosmersholm.

The reasons as stated above, we can say that Rebecca wants to establish her self-existence, self-freedom, and self-power like a modern woman. She wants to lead her life independently like a true modern woman. She tries utmost to fulfill her expectations and dreams in spite of working as a maid-servant in her master's house.

Erotic Passion and Love

Moreover, this article would like to examine erotic passion and love of Rebecca, being reflected in *Rosmersholm*, with a view to focusing on the issues of power and sexuality. What Ibsen shares is a vision of eroticism that extends into the world of an unhappiness of civilized existence where unconstrained pleasure cannot co-exist with an ethical consideration. Rebecca experiences her own moral wreckage as a tide of uncontrollable passion. Erotic passion sweeps on her like a powerful storm upon an ocean. Like a storm, she faces in winter season in the northern Norway. She is full of passion of power and sexuality that she cannot resist and control.

Rebecca shifts through sexual sensation with an incontrovertible passion. It is neither a form of endearment, nor romantic affection. It is pure erotic passion that erupts out of a natural disaster. She loses confidence in herself as an autonomous being. She knows that one's rational mind is not always independent of an irrational impulse. She comes to recognize a condition of extreme enthrallment to power and sexuality which she cannot control. She is intensified by an acute consciousness of the divided self as it registers the values of moral intelligence. She expresses her depressed pain and melancholic mood while she talks with Rosmer. Rosmersholm smashes her into pieces. Once she was courageous and strong-willed. It was the time when she first came into Rosmer's house. She had courage, and she was born with a free will. But, the worsening situation begins to smash her will and turn her into a political coward for the rest of her life. Rosmersholm begins to paralyze physical power. Rosmer tradition, and its view of life and his view of life infects her will, makes it sick, and enslave it to laws that meant nothing to her before. Her inner mindset has been racked by physically aggressive forces. She is ennobled through the strange moral beauty of a selfless, inert person. She is engulfed in a deep recesses of soul by nobility as a forthcoming irresistible tide. (Levy, 2000, p. 222)

Rebecca comes to realize happiness, nobility, and gratification of an individual desire and survival of culture. The tragedy of sexual desire lies not only in its self-destructive operation, but merely in its indifference to taboo. The play, *Rosmersholm* is based on the dissonant function of

spirit in human struggle to balance the life-force with ideological conviction and harmonize instinctive need with the rage for cultural order:

The different functions of the spirit do not develop uniformly or comparably in any one individual. The acquisitive instinct rushes on from one conquest to the next. Moral consciousness, however, “the conscience” is by comparison very conservative. It has its roots deep in tradition and in the past generally. From this comes the conflict within the individual.²

From the quotation made above, we can understand that Ibsen’s Rebecca is a symbol of struggle for psychological power and freedom through spiritual development and instinct. Erotic passion can be conceived through power. On the contrary, it is connected with the bodies by the structure of the visible and the invisible in the categories of rhythm. She represents strength of power, will, courage, and sexuality. She inspires Rosmer to follow her principles so that he seems to be ready to realize his quest for a cultural revolutionary project of an ennoblement of men. She incarnates sublime erotic in a seductive way. She is both seductive and attractive because she gleams of an immediate desire for life by creating a light around her. Her seductive power is connected with ambiguity. She thinks that there are two wills in every human being.

The discourse around her eroticism is connected with the phenomena of the visible and the mythic. Fascinating ambiguities in her identity and her mastering of masquerading are exposed by the ways she is addressed. Is she Rebecca or Miss West, or both in a mixture, or the wife or the mistress of the house? This reminds us of her enigmatic and double identity. (p. 222)

In the play, *Rosmersholm*, Ibsen wants to present a full-blown myth of love. It is the myth of complete union between Rebecca and Rosmer. Rebecca narrates her own development in three stages: (i) will, (ii) lust, and (iii) love. Her anxiety about her own sexuality is a reminder of the importance of cultural taboo in the formation of guilt. She resists her own desire. And, she discovers that in the place of lust, her love for Rosmer grows slowly. But, a love like this is devoid of joy. She has been tamed. She comes to Rosmersholm with philosophy of freedom and vitality. She wants to be his mistress to spin her web of intrigue. The aim is to burden Beata with guilt that she may step aside. She plays on her childlessness. Childless Beata drowns herself in the falls so that Rebecca can give birth to a legitimate heir to the estate and can carry on the line. Rosmer’s contribution to the spiritual murder of Beata is not so much what he does. His betrayal lies in the fact that he neither sees nor understands Beata:

Rosmer: Of course not. It was impossible to doubt it unfortunately. You remember what I told you of her ungovernable, wild fits of passion – which she expected me to reciprocate. She terrified me! And, think how she tortured

² Ibsen, “Letters to Bjorn Kristensen,” in *Oxford Ibsen* (1887) edited by James McFarlane. VI (Oxford, 1960), p. 447.

herself with baseless self - reproaches in the last years of her life!
(*Rosmersholm*, Act IV, 28)

Beata spoke as though she were mentally unbalanced. But, we begin to suspect whether she is not so much unbalanced in the deepest despair. Part of his blindness lies in his impotence to distinguish between passion and madness. Rosmer asks for Rebecca's hand in marriage. He needs Rebecca as his wife in order to get rid himself of the burden of guilt being connected with Beata. He cannot go through life with a corpse on his back. So, he wants to use Rebecca as a tool in his own spiritual housekeeping. He is not that kind of husband. She has been dreaming, nor is the state of freedom from guilt, of which she has been dreaming. His proposal does not come from a spiritual aristocrat; rather it comes from a spiritual bondage. (Skarderud, 2006, p. 62) In this way, Ibsen wants to present power, erotic passion, and love of 19th-century Norwegian bourgeois system through the character-study of Rebecca West.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is the coercion of a sexual nature, or the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours. Harassment can include sexual harassment, or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. The legal definition of sexual harassment differs by jurisdiction. Where laws surrounding sexual harassment exist do not prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, and minor isolated incident. In the work-place, harassment may be considered illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment. However, the legal and social understanding of sexual harassment varies from culture to culture, or society to society.

Effects of sexual harassment can vary by depending on the individuality of the recipient, and the verity and duration of the harassment. Often, sexual harassment incidents fall into a category of annoyance. In other situations, harassment may lead to temporary, prolonged stress, and depression by depending on the recipient's psychological abilities to cope with harassment severe sexual harassment can have the same psychological effect as rape or sexual assault. Victims who do not submit to harassment may also experience various forms of retaliation, including isolation and bullying. As an overall social and economic effect every year, sexual harassment deprives women of active social and economic participation.

- 1) Sexual harassment is noticed in Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm*. Johanna in *Ghosts* is sexually harassed and oppressed by Captain Alving when she works as a maid-servant in the Alving family. And, Rebecca in *Rosmersholm* is also sexually harassed by her adopted father Doctor West when she lives with him. At that time she had no power to protest against him. She had to endure such unsocial activities on the sly when nobody came to save her life. Now, the current researcher would like to show how Rebecca becomes a victim of sexual harassment.

Freud dedicates himself to develop an interesting analysis of the character-complexity of Rebecca. According to Freud, “How could it come about that the adventures with the ‘fearless, free will,’ who forged her way ruthlessly to her desired goal, should refuse to pluck the fruit of success when it is offered to her?” (Gavlovsky, 2000, p.104) In Act IV, Rebecca gives Rosmer the answer herself: “this is the terrible part of it: that now, when all life’s happiness is within my grasp – my heart is changed, and my own past cuts me off from it.” (p.104)

According to Freud, the unconscious enters the arena. He says that it is a matter not only of a justified sense of guilt Rebecca feels, but also of an unconscious guilt related to something in the past. Freud shows the concealed abysses that lie in the unconscious mind. In the play, *Rosmersholm*, we see that Rebecca confesses her traumatic experiences to Rosmer and Kroll. As Freud writes, “Ibsen has made it clear by small touches of masterly inability that Rebecca does not actually tell lies, but, is never entirely straightforward” (p.104). It is through this opening of half-truth that we enter the dark world of her past. Freud discovers incestuous relationship between Rebecca West and her adoptive father Doctor West. In his intelligent way, Ibsen uses the voice of Kroll to tell the truth about her past mystery. He says that she is the bastard child of the doctor who adopts her after the death of her mother, whom she takes care of the last moment as a legitimate daughter. What Kroll does not count on the fact that she does not know that she is the daughter of Doctor West? When Rosmer forgives her and asks her to be his wife, guilt feelings about her incest emerge. Then, Rebecca accuses herself of being a murderer and prepares to leave Rosmer and Rosmersholm, because she knows that she lives in an incestuous relationship.

Freud applies his theory of “Oedipus Complex” while making an interpretation of Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm*. He proposes Rosmer–Beata–Rebecca triangle as a repetition of Doctor West – Mother – Rebecca triangle. And, it is this guilt-complex that overwhelms Rebecca at the moment of proposal. She realizes that she would be replacing Beata, just as she once replaced her mother. According to Freud, multiple motivations in Ibsen’s dramatic creation have “a fantasy led by a most critical intelligence.” (p.105) In the case of Rebecca, Freud recognizes “a case of multiple motivations in which a deeper motive comes into view behind the more superficial one.” (p. 105) Laws that rule the economics of poverty structures such a presentation of Rebecca’s case because the deeper motive should not be shown, but should remain concealed from the reader. Freud points out how Ibsen acquires his poetic conscience out of an unconscious motive. Thus, we can see in Rebecca how the feeling of guilt has its source in the reproach of incest, even before Kroll with analytic perspicacity, makes her conscious of it.

Freud also points out that a girl who enters a household as a servant, companion, or governess, will, consciously, or unconsciously, weave a day-dream of becoming the mistress of a house. He comments that the play, *Rosmersholm* is “the greatest work of art of the class that treats of this common phantasm in girls” (Gavlovski, 2000, p. 105).

In fact, Freud analyzes “Rebecca Complex,” like “Oedipus complex,” through the tool of psychoanalysis. From Freudian psychological point of view, Rebecca is the victim of irony of fate, like Oedipus in Sophocles’ play, *Oedipus Rex*.

From this study, we realize that Rebecca has been sexually harassed and oppressed by Doctor West after her mother's death. Before entering Rosmer's house, she experiences sexual harassment from her adopted father. But, now she needs no predicative experience. Therefore, she rejects Rosmer's marriage proposal. Ibsen's aim is to show sexual violence of his contemporary women through portraying Rebecca's character. In the 21st-century society, Rebecca's image is a very common affair in our society. We find cases of sexual harassment and oppression, some of which are published in the daily newspapers, and are presented through different social media each and every day.

Rebecca and Louka

The article wants to make a comparative study between Rebecca and Louka with a view to exposing power, freedom, and self-existence.

From the social point of view, we can determine the position between Rebecca and Louka if a comparative analysis is drawn between them. Both Ibsen and Shaw are found to be aware of the state of women of the age. They always strongly advocate the cause of social equity. They are critical of philosophy that servants are an inferior set of things whose duty and responsibility are to promote happiness of the superiors. As socialists at their heart, they never can suffer the so-called air of superiority that birth or wealth seems to confer on those who have nothing to recommend them. Hence, they represent in their plays the new type of servants who are conscious of their rights.

Both Rebecca and Louka are the daughters of poor family. But, they are proud, defiant, and uneducated. They have no romantic illusion. They are the maid-servants of Rosmersholm and of the Petkoff family, respectively. But, they are ambitious and radical minded. They are shrewd women and keen observers. They have got extraordinary wit and cleverness. They take the fullest advantages of Rosmer's and Sergious's attraction to physical charm and glamour. They do not try to understand the higher love of Rosmer and Sergious. They understand what a real love is. They love their lovers; but love is not something emotional to them. They are rebellious against the society that considers human beings only in terms of money and class position. They are Ibsen's and Shaw's mouthpieces of conveying their democratic and radical ideas.

From the discussion made above, we can say that both Rebecca in *Rosmersholm* and Louka in *Arms and the Man* are the symbols of high ambitions and expectations although in reality they are confined to male-domination, and are being deprived of social rights and privileges.

Inner Significance of the Study

A woman has to face lots of hurdles at every step of life. She is considered as a submissive and inferior being in a male dominated society. Even today's social system has failed to meet female demand and physiological needs. When male attitude will recognize a female as an equal being, it is uncertain. With the passage of time female community have been regarded as inferior being, when equality and equity prevail between male and female is the question of our

mind. Whatever the matter; nobody can give a permanent solution in a single hand, it requires a gigantic effort of the whole and greater humanity to come to an equal stage.

However, Ibsen has presented a female's tale in a very deeper level of social system where she is none to call her own. His art of female characterization makes us think of a 19th-century Norwegian social system and strata where he acutely perceives contemporary women's degradation and humiliation very closely. It would seem to us that he himself leads his life as a female body and mind. Generally a female tale is farmed in a novel and story form, but in Ibsen's plays we see that women's social position is perfectly pictured. His ideology and core philosophy makes him as a feminist thinker but in real sense he is not a feminist critic.

Female Mystery

Ibsen- not as a feminist supporter but as a sharp observer of social custom and manner of a 19th-century Norway- would like to present a woman's tale which is very pathetic and miserable. This playwright has tried to present a woman as a powerful being and autonomous self so that she can protect herself to live freely on earth. For example, the mystery is that when a weaker animal has to fight against a powerful wild animal just for living in the forest. Such a perfect picture is seen African forest where a group of animals always hide themselves so that they can save themselves from hyena, tiger, lion and poisonous wild beasts. In this way their life-cycle has been getting continued with the passage of ages. If we carefully look at the realm of Ibsen's oeuvre, we see that his portray of second sex communities fall victim of social stigma, deceit, mental depression, agony, sexual assault and above all domestic violence. A female without any parental identity and familial support struggles continuously so that she can lead a modest and simple life style just to feed or to maintain herself life living in a shabby cottage. Ibsen's women have gathered pathetic and panoramic experiences living in a traditional social system where they cannot expect light and hope from other community. Women have accepted social order and system without any protest. They have no power to say a single word or language to do any task against a male rule; such type of lace we can see in Rozina and Johanna in *Ghosts*, Christina in *A Doll's House*, Rebecca in *Rosmersholm*. At the early stage of life, these Ibsen's women are seen to be immature. When they recognize the outer world, they have to do something to tackle the situation. They never wait a single moment to decide. Here we can clarify the fact that Rozina, Rebecca and Christina are seen to leave their house with a view to finding out self-freedom who they are and what their duty and responsibility is towards themselves and beyond. Fight for livelihood is the main pursuit of such female body. It seems to us that Ibsen's ultimate truth of life is to globalize female mystery and unnoticed familial concerns through art of female characterization, plot-construction, act, sight and setting.

Conclusion

The current researcher has tried to shed a new light upon Rebecca West, a female protagonist in the play, *Rosmersholm*. He has fostered hypnotizing power and radical attitudes of Rebecca West. As a social reformer and critic of his age, Ibsen has presented women's situation of 19th-century Scandinavian bourgeois society in reference to literary works. For this purpose, this study has focused on Rebecca West as a modern woman. Erotic passion, love, and sexual harassment have been exposed through the character-study of Rebecca. Also, the researcher has made a comparative study between Rebecca and Louka with a view to showing Ibsen's and Shaw's treatment of women of the age.

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